


<p style="text-align: center;"><b>City of Schenectady, New York</b>  <b>Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot</b></p> <p>U.S. EPA, Region 2  290 Broadway  New York, New York</p> <p style="text-align: right;">November 2001</p>	
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## Program Information

The EPA Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is an abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial or commercial facility where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived contamination. Since 1995, EPA has funded more than 300 Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilots, at up to \$200,000 each, enabling localities to clarify environmental contamination issues in order to facilitate redevelopment. Pilot funds are for site assessment, reuse planning and related community involvement. EPA Region 2 provides direct support to the States, Tribes, counties, municipalities, and communities of New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands as they continue to seek new methods to promote site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

## I. Overview

In June 1999, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency selected the City of Schenectady, New York as a Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot. Schenectady (population 65,566) is located on the Mohawk River northwest of Albany. The City's importance in the transportation and manufacturing industries began when the Erie Canal opened in 1823. In 1886, Thomas Edison established Edison Machine Works, which later became General Electric. From the turn of the century to the early 1960s, General Electric, along with the American Locomotive Company, played a major role in Schenectady's economy and fostered a period of steady growth. The subsequent failure or downsizing of these companies stopped the boom and ushered in the City's economic decline.

Today, Schenectady's population is down 30 percent from its peak, and the number of residents employed in manufacturing, once nearly 50 percent of the workforce, is now only 5 percent. More than 50 percent of the residents are classified as low- to moderate-income, and almost 15 percent live below the poverty level. Through tax foreclosures, Schenectady has acquired more than 250 potentially contaminated properties, over 200 of which are located in low- to moderate-income neighborhoods. The City is interested in redeveloping properties located in commercial or industrial areas; however, the environmental uncertainty surrounding the sites has thus far discouraged these efforts.

The City is a federally designated Enterprise Community and is part of the state-designated Schenectady/Glenville (Glenville is a neighboring community) Economic Development Zone.

## II. Brownfields Pilot Progress

### Implementation Strategy

As part of Schenectady's overall plans for both economic and community development, the City's Brownfields strategy seeks to reclaim older abandoned and underutilized industrial sites for a variety of productive uses including industrial development, commercial development, housing, and public open space. Schenectady's Brownfields program is carried out from the City of Schenectady's Department of Engineering and Public Works.

Schenectady's redevelopment effort is guided by various agencies with different goals. Although the agency-specific goals may differ, the overall objective for the City is the redevelopment of its brownfields into productive and sustainable spaces for business or recreation. The City's primary interest in this program is to ultimately create jobs and to return abandoned/under-used properties to the tax rolls in the City.

In order to address the sites, Schenectady has formed partnerships with over 15 government, private, and community organizations. These organizations include: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; General Electric; Union College; Schenectady Economic Development Corporation; and Schenectady 2000, a grassroots organization formed by business and community leaders.

The City also plans to access additional assistance from other government sources including EPA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Economic Development Administration, and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

In late November 2000, the City participated in a regional Federal Interagency Workgroup meeting, where the pilot manager presented information on community revitalization goals, activities, and overall community development resource needs to federal and state agency representatives. The meeting provided public agency staff with a better understanding of the community in order to enhance an agency's ability to provide assistance.

To implement the Pilot program, the City of Schenectady has signed an Agreement for Professional Consultant Services with ATC Associates, Inc. (the Consultant Team).

### **Community Involvement**

The City has already developed strong ties with various community groups under its existing redevelopment program and intends to increase the amount of community involvement through the implementation of a Community Involvement Plan (CIP). The objective of the CIP is to identify, organize, and involve the affected communities and citizens in the site selection, assessment, and cleanup process.

The Consultant Team submitted to the City of Schenectady a list of proposed Task Force members and a questionnaire to screen the potential Task Force members. The City then conducted telephone interviews of the perspective Task Force members. Twenty Task Force members were selected, and on October 30, 2000 the City held its first Brownfields Community Task Force meeting. The meeting agenda included a discussion on site inventory issues, such as additional sites and possible end uses, and a review of 250 city-owned sites for possible project involvement. Two more Task Force meetings were held in January and March 2001. The agenda for these meetings included discussions on the site selection criteria, ranking methodology, and the results of the site ranking.

The Consultant Team has had discussions with key stakeholders concerning privately held properties that have potential for inclusion in the program. The Consultant Team has also completed a Soft Sounding Research Report. The report outlined the results of citizen interviews and research conducted to determine how the citizens of Schenectady feel about the Brownfield program. This report was submitted to and approved by the City of Schenectady.

Further community involvement has included the first public information meeting held in March 2001. The agenda for this meeting included a discussion of the results of the site ranking and selection of three potential sites. The City has also posted its brownfields web site, published a press release describing the progress of the Pilot program in the Daily Gazette and Times Union, and prepared a newsletter for distribution to the community.

### **III. Brownfield Site Activities**

#### **Site Inventory**

Primarily through tax foreclosures, the City of Schenectady currently owns over 250 commercial or industrial zoned sites, over 200 of which are located in low to moderate-income neighborhoods. A list of these properties was provided to the Consultant Team by the City of Schenectady. Additionally, City, local, and neighborhood officials were queried to compile a list of privately-owned potential Pilot sites.

From this preliminary list of sites the City of Schenectady and the Consultant Team completed an inventory of 281 properties to be evaluated for potential brownfield pilot sites. Because many of these parcels were too small for significant redevelopment, they were grouped together to form larger parcels of potential brownfield sites.

Site information was collected for these potential sites to conduct the preliminary site screening. Screening information collected included site ownership, past uses, potential benefits to the community or neighborhood, known or suspected contamination, and physical health and safety concerns (for example, unsafe structures and site conditions). Additional site inventory information was gathered from a geographic information system (GIS) that will be maintained by both the City and County of Schenectady.

#### **Site Selection**

The Consultant Team has completed the selection criteria, ranking methodology, and site ranking spreadsheet. The Consultant Team selected criterion which relate to the successful implantation of the Project Goals, which are to redevelop vacant or under utilized brownfield sites for commercial light industrial purposes. The Site selection criteria include the following:

- Property Size
- Site Location
- Utilities (including Fiber Optics)
- Development Suitability
- Access
- Occupancy
- Improvements
- Environmental Impairments
- Property ownership
- Zoning and relevant land use regulations

The Consultant Team also developed a site ranking methodology based on economic, environmental, infrastructure, and planning criteria. The Consultant Team ranked the sites in the inventory of potential brownfield sites and selected three brownfields sites for consideration by the Task Force. These sites, identified as likely candidates for Pilot assessment, are:

- A nine-acre assemblage of properties on Broadway. The properties were formerly utilized as junkyards and a bulk oil distribution center.

- The five-acre former ALCO maintenance facility
- A ten-acre assemblage known as the Big N Retail Center Site, which was formerly used by ALCO and the Atomic Energy Commission

Additionally, the Consultant Team has completed a draft of the Non Site-Specific Quality Assurance Plan.

### **Site Assessment and Reuse Planning**

Following the site inventory and selection process, selected sites will undergo site assessment activities. The Consultant Team is compiling site specific data that will be used to prepare the brownfield site assessments. To date, a GIS based inventory of the three sites has been established.

Reuse planning for Schenectady will focus on long-term benefits and sustainability. The City hopes that redevelopment near inner-city residential, educational, and shopping areas will provide employment opportunities for local residents. Reuse planning will also help protect physical resources such as historic structures and buildings in Schenectady. Please refer to the individual site profiles for more information.

### **IV. Measures of Success**

#### **Properties Estimated in Brownfields Pilot Areas: 281**

For the entire Pilot area, the number of properties/parcels which have been identified by the pilot as brownfields. The Pilot area includes the entire jurisdiction of the Pilot (e.g., the entire City of Chicago or the State of Minnesota), not just the specific area(s) that the Pilot has defined as target areas.

#### **Properties Reported to be Contained in Pilot Inventories: 281**

For the entire Pilot area, the number of properties/parcels which have been included in an inventory of brownfields properties/parcels. Types of brownfields inventories include: lists, spreadsheets, and databases (geographic information systems or other forms). These inventories may include lists such as a foreclosure list of abandoned industrial sites, a state list of no-further action sites, etc.

#### **Properties Reported to be Targeted by Pilot: 3**

For the entire Pilot area, the number of brownfields properties/parcels the Pilot reports it is "targeting", or at which the Pilot says it will conduct, is conducting, or has conducted activities such as assessment, cleanup planning, facilitation of redevelopment, community outreach, etc.

### **V. Non-Site Specific Funding Leveraged**

Funding that has been leveraged under the pilot program, but cannot be attributed to any one site.

#### **A. Non-Site Specific Funding Leveraged for Assessment**

Funded by: ☐ Local (City) ☐ Local (County) ☐ Private ☐ State ☐ Other Federal

Amount Funded: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Additional information concerning funding: Funding is Federal-EPA.

#### **B. Non-Site Specific Funding Leveraged for Remedial Plan**

Funded by: ☐ Local (City) ☐ Local (County) ☐ Private ☐ State ☐ Other Federal

Amount Funded: \$\_\_\_\_\_

**C. Non-Site Specific Funding Leveraged for Redevelopment**

Funded by: ☐ Local (City) ☐ Local (County) ☐ Private ☐ State ☐ Other Federal

Amount Funded: \$\_\_\_\_\_

**VI. Current Activities**

The Consultant Team has completed an inventory of City and privately-owned sites, applied the site ranking criteria and methodology, and selected three potential Pilot sites for consideration by the Task Force. The Consultant Team has also prepared a draft of the Non-Site Specific Brownfields Quality Assurance Program Plan.

The Task Force met in January and March 2001 to discuss site inventory issues such as site selection criteria and methodology, and the results of the site ranking.

The first public information meeting was held in March 2001. The agenda for this meeting included a discussion of the results of the site ranking and selection of three potential sites. The City also posted its brownfields web site, published a press release describing the progress of the Pilot program in the Daily Gazette and Times Union, and prepared a newsletter for distribution to the community.

The City of Schenectady Industrial Development Agency (IDA) is independently working to bring private industrial and commercial employers into the area to provide private funding for cleanup and restoration of potential brownfields sites. Other brownfields activities that the City is conducting include preparation of a Master Plan for redevelopment of the Schenectady downtown business district and a brownfields redevelopment project adjacent to the City's oldest neighborhood.

## VII. Contact Information

### Pilot Contact

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For more information on the Schenectady/Glenville Economic Development Zone, visit the website at <http://www.sgedz.org/index.html>. For more information on the Pilot Program, visit the website at <http://www.schenectadybrownfields.com>.

### EPA Contact

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For more information on EPA's Brownfields Initiative visit EPA's website at:

National Website <http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf>  
Regional Website <http://www.epa.gov/r02earth/superfnd/brownfld/bfmainpg.htm>